

TIPS

Ages 13 & Up

For parents, this is a pivotal time in helping kids make positive choices when faced with drugs and alcohol. The average age kids try drugs for the first time is 13. Experts say if your child is 13, you should assume that he or she has been offered drugs or alcohol. But you can help your teen stay healthy and drug-free — and beat the negative statistics about drug use among teens. Kids who learn about the risks of drugs from their parents are up to 50 percent less likely to use (2011 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study). Most importantly, stay involved. Young teens may say they don't need your guidance, but they're much more open to it than they let on. Make sure you talk to them about their choices of friends — drug use in teens starts as a social behavior.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. While there is no single reason teens try alcohol and drugs, there are some common issues and influences behind teenage drug and alcohol use. It is important as a parent to understand these reasons and talk to your kids about the dangers of drinking and using drugs along with helping them find healthier alternatives and options. Some top reasons include: peers, family, media, escape, self-medicating, stress, boredom, low self-esteem, instant gratification, and misinformation.
 - You could start the conversation by saying, “I know that the teen years are stressful, what ways do you cope with your stress?” Depending on the response can lead to exploration of good coping skills you can discuss.
 - Ask your child why they feel kids use drugs and/or alcohol.
2. Questions to ask to start the conversation include:
 - Do you think it is easy to get drugs or alcohol?
 - Do you think marijuana is a gateway drug?
 - What will you do if you are in a car and realize the driver has taken drugs or alcohol? What if the driver is an adult?
 - What will you do if you are at a party where drugs or alcohol are being used? What will you say when you are offered drugs?
 - What will you do if you suspect one of your friends is experimenting with drugs? Who would you tell?



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www.harfordcountymd.gov/services/drugcontrol

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ACTIVITIES:

1. Make a plan of what your teen would do in various situations which should include: what they would do and say, who they will call for help and how they will leave a bad situation in a hurry.
2. Play a game
 - On-line games can be found at <https://www.teens.drugabuse.gov/games>
 - Conversation Exchange Game at <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/7788>
3. Have your teen make a list of common stressors among adolescents. Ask them to share ways that teens may deal with each of those stressors. Then group the stressors into helpful and hurtful coping strategies. Discuss how drug use can be a harmful coping strategy and how it can be a stressor itself.
4. Ask your teen to develop a list of ways to “get high” without using drugs. Some ideas are; playing sports, laughing with friends, listening to music, watching TV or movies, doing volunteer work, dancing, singing, acting... following a passion.

FACTS:

- The average age kids try drugs for the first time is 13.
- According to the 2015 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 8.1% of 9th graders, 14.5% of 10th graders, 21% of 11th graders and 32.9% of 12th graders in Harford County reported regularly participating in binge drinking.
- 4 out of 5 heroin addictions begin with the misuse of prescription pain killers.
- According to the 2015 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 8.9% of 9th graders, 12.4% of 10th graders, 18.1% of 11th graders, and 20.5% of 12th graders reported taking a prescription drug without a doctor’s prescription one or more times during the past 30 days of the survey.
- 9 out of 10 people with substance problems started using by age 18.
- Teen abuse of prescription (Rx) pain medicine, also known as opioids, usually starts in two ways. Some teens start abusing it at a party or with friends because they’re curious or think it will make them feel good. Others start taking it legitimately when prescribed by a doctor after an injury or dental procedure. In some cases, legitimate use turns to dependence, abuse, addiction and then heroin use.
- Substances in your teen’s world can include: Tobacco, alcohol, prescription drugs such as pain killers, depressants, and stimulants, inhalants and illicit drugs such as marijuana, synthetic drugs, heroin, LSD, mushrooms, cocaine/crack, GHB, rohypnol and ketamine.

SOURCES/RESOURCES

<http://www.drugfree.org/>

<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts>

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/treatment/what-to-do-if-your-teen-or-young-adult-has-problem-drugs>

<http://www.drugfreeworld.org/drugfacts.html>



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